



General Assembly Facts

- There are 135 men and women who serve in the Arkansas House of Representatives and Senate.
- Arkansas's system of government mimics the federal government. It maintains a division of authority among three branches — legislative, executive and judicial — which balance the government's power to prevent its abuse.
- The General Assembly is the legislative branch of state government and has the authority to write and enact state laws.
- The executive branch, with the Governor as chief executive, administers these laws.
- The judicial branch, headed by the state Supreme Court, administers justice and interprets the law in accordance with the Constitution.
- There are 35 members of the state Senate and 100 members of the House.
- The Lieutenant Governor serves as President of the Senate. In his absence, the Senate President Pro Tempore serves in his place.
- The presiding officer of the House, the Speaker, is elected by House members at the beginning of each regular session.
- The Arkansas Constitution calls for the General Assembly to meet in regular session for 60 days each odd-numbered year.
- Regular sessions may be extended by a two-thirds vote of the membership of both houses.
- Much of the study and discussion of legislation takes place in committee during the interim, the period between legislative sessions.
- Special sessions of the General Assembly may be called only by the Governor. During these sessions, legislators only may introduce bills relating to the subjects in the Governor's Proclamation. However, after these matters have been resolved, the General Assembly may, by a two-thirds vote of both houses, extend the special session by fifteen days and consider other business.
- The General Assembly is highly structured to deal effectively with all issues. Legislative meetings are open to the public.



The Senate

- The Arkansas General Assembly convenes on the second Monday of every other year.
- The state Senate has 35 members, each representing one of 35 districts with about 76,383 people each.
- A Senate member must be 25 years old.
- A Senate member must be a resident of Arkansas for two years and a resident of his or her district for one year
- No member of the Arkansas Senate may serve more than two four year terms.
- A session lasts for 60 days unless the legislature votes to extend it.
- The major issues are funding of public schools, institutions of higher education, highway and bridge construction, health and human services, state prisons, the State Police and state parks.
- Service in the state legislature is part-time, and most state senators have full-time jobs during the rest of the year.
- The 35-member Arkansas Senate has eight Republicans and 27 Democrats. There are six women and three African-Americans.



The House of Representatives

- The House of Representatives consists of 100 members elected from 100 districts
- Each House district has an average population of 26,734, according to the 2000 census.
- The House of the 85th General Assembly is made up of 84 men and 16 women; 72 are Democrats and 28 are Republicans.
- A House member must be at least 21 years old.
- A House member must be a resident of Arkansas for two years and a resident of their district for one year.
- Members of the House serve two-year terms and may serve no more than three terms in office.
- The Speaker of the House presides over the body and is elected by the membership every two years.
- The Speaker also appoints a leadership team, which includes a Speaker Pro Tempore, who presides in the absence of the Speaker.
- The House utilizes an electronic voting system. To vote, a member pushes buttons on his or her desk: The green button means "yes," the red button "no" and the yellow "present." The votes are displayed on two large electronic boards at the front of the House chamber and are counted at the Speaker's desk.
- Each Representative serves on two Standing Committees, and each committee has 20 members.
- Representatives also serve on five committees that operate jointly with the Senate.